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AUTHOR Holman, Martha: Gailey, Lamar
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ABSTRACT

This module on chair caning is one of eight modules designed to provide instruction on authentic Blue Ridge Mountain crafts to adult basic education students at a low cost. Contents include notes on the history of caning: process used, including equipment and materials, as well as method described narratively and graphically; and the followup, where the student is told how to progress to higher levels of proficiency. The Fry readability level of this module is 3.5. A teacher's guide which lists resources for each module in the series is available separately (see Note). (MEK)

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SHARING THE ARTS OF THE BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS

CANING

Conducted By:

Pioneer Cooperative Educational Service Agency
Adult Education Office
Cleveland, Georgia 30528

Conducted Under the Auspicies of the
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CE 024 362

Lamar Gailey
Coordinator
Adult General Education

Martha Holman
Project Director
Special 309 Project

PREFACE

"Sharing the Arts of the Blue Ridge Mountains" is written so you, the AGE student, can learn about mountain arts. There are eight modules. Each module tells about the history of one art. Each module tells how to make a useful item the way mountain craftsmen do.

Crafts used to be a way of life for mountain families. People in the mountains were secluded. Families had to make everything they used. Later, city people wanted to buy these items. A crafts market developed. The mountain people found they could enjoy making things and have an income.

Today many people like to make items. It is a pleasure to make things. People still like to buy handmade items. Thus, there is still a market for items that are interesting to make.

In writing these modules, about 30 artists and craftsmen were interviewed. The craftsmen and artists shared the way they created their crafts. Project staff also visited Hambidge Center at Rabun Gap, Georgia; Berea in Kentucky; and Pi Beta Phi Arrowmont School, Gatlinburg, Tennessee. These schools are three of the ones which teach mountain arts and crafts. They were established to teach the mountain people some of the dying crafts in the early 1900's.

Today these schools, as well as John C. Campbell Folk School, Brasstown, North Carolina, and Penland Institute, Penland, North Carolina, have classes. Many vocational-technical schools also teach crafts. Junior colleges sometimes offer non-credit craft courses. The Cooperative Extension Service holds some craft classes. Later you may want to go to a class at one of these schools.

Bob Nichols of Helen, Georgia, did the art work for this project.

Mr. B. C. Cranford was the special consultant for this module. This project could not have been written without his help. Mr. Cranford worked with the project staff on basic techniques and procedures for caning chairs.

If you want to learn more about the Blue Ridge Mountain area or chair caning, your AGE teacher has a list of books and resources.

MR. B. C. CRANFORD, Consultant

Mr. B. C. Cranford canes a chair.

Mr. B. C. Cranford of Cleveland, Georgia, is one of the few people in the area who canes chairs for the public. People come from Georgia, Florida, and North Carolina to have him cane their chairs.

Mr. Cranford's father taught him to cane when he was a boy. However, he did not use his skills to make a living. For many years he was an electrician. Then, people began to ask him to fix chairs. This hobby grew into a full-time job.

Mr. Cranford is skilled in repairing all types of chair seats. He works with oak splints, rattan, wicker and grass rope, as well as cane.

The size or shape of a chair seat or back is no problem for Mr. Cranford. He prides himself on some of the odd pieces he has fixed. Mr. Cranford excels in the art of chair caning.

CHAIR CANING

I. ABOUT CHAIR CANING

Through history chairs have been important. Chairs have been different shapes and sizes. Some have been wood. Some have been metal. Some had wooden seats. Others had fabric seats. Still others had rattan cane seats.

When the Blue Ridge Mountains area was settled, most people brought little furniture with them. Some people brought chairs. However, most chairs were made later. These chairs were made from native woods. Most chairs were plain. There was little decoration on them. Most of these early chairs had oak splint seats in them. (Oak splints are strips of oak. These are woven into a chair seat.)

Some chairs that were brought to the mountain area had cane seats. As the pioneers became settled, they became interested in more ornate furniture. Thus, people began buying new cane bottomed chairs and repairing their old ones.

Rattan cane, which grows in the jungles of the East, was used. This same cane is used today.

Plastic cane is now made. It looks similar to natural cane. The coloring is not as varied. Plastic is not effected by weather.

Cane is sold in hanks. A hank is 1000 linear feet. The cane varies from 10 to 20 feet in length. One hank should weave 2 or 3 chairs. The cost depends on the width and quality of the cane. An average cost is $8.00.

Cane comes in different sizes. Fine and medium are the most common sizes. To determine what size you need, measure the diameter (the width across) the hole. Now measure the distance between the holes. (This is from the center of one hole to the center of next hole.) Figure 1.

Use the following chart in choosing the cane you need. It might be helpful to take a piece of the old cane with you to the store.

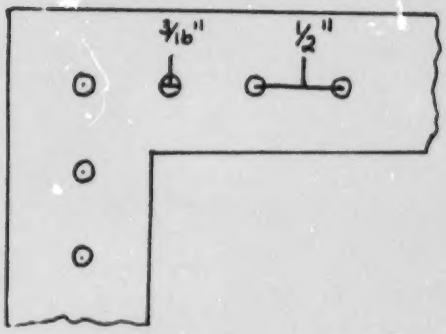

Figure 1

Diameter of Holes	Space Between Holes	Size of Cane
3/16 inch	3/8 inch	Superfine
3/16 inch	1/2 inch	Fine-fine
3/16 inch	5/8 inch	Fine
1/4 inch	3/4 inch	Medium
5/16 inch	7/8 inch	Common

There are seven basic steps for caning a chair:

1. Cane back to front
2. Cane side to side
3. Cane back to front again
4. Cane side to side. Weaver over the top and under the bottom canes.
5. Cane diagonal from right side. Weave <u>over</u> back to front. Weave <u>under</u> side to side.
6. Cane diagonal from left side. Weave <u>over</u> side to side. Weave <u>under</u> front to back.
7. Trim out the edges.

II. HOW TO CANE A CHAIR

Select a chair you wish to cane. The chair must have small holes around the seat. (Figure 2) A chair seat with a continuous groove around the seat will not work.

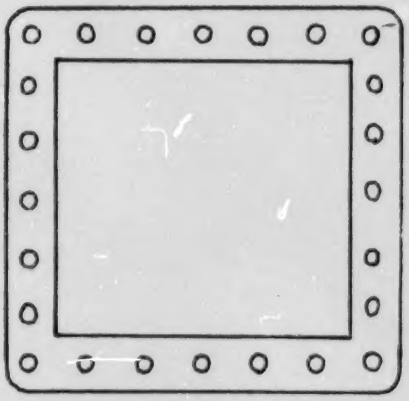

Figure 2

Shapes of chair seats vary. Some are round. Others are square or odd shaped.

Any of these can be used.

Make any needed repairs to the chair. Refinish or paint it if you wish.

The equipment you will need is:

1. An awl or ice pick.
2. Pliers.
3. A square wedge (Use a small square of wood; an ice pick with a cork stuck on the end will do.)
4. About 15 wooden pegs, golf tees, or short pencils. (Pegs can usually be purchased where you get your cane.)
5. Scissors.
6. A large pan or bucket of hot water.
7. Old towels.
8. A sponge.
9. Clothes pins.
10. 5 or 6 pieces of cane.
11. One long piece of binder cane.
12. White glue.

Remove the cane from the hank. Pull it out one piece at a time. This will prevent tangling. Roll each strand right side out loosely over your hand. Fasten the cane with a clothes pin. Soak the rolled cane in

hot water about five minutes. The cane should be soft. It should bend easily. Do not oversoak the cane. Keep the cane damp while working with it. Wet a sponge. Gently wipe the cane with the wet sponge. This should dampen it enough to work with it easily.

Remember to always keep the shiny side of the cane up. Do not let the cane twist. Twisting will break the cane. Never pass over a hole on the underside. Always keep the cane damp!

Place the chair so that you are facing the front of it. The right side refers to the side on your right. (Figure 3)

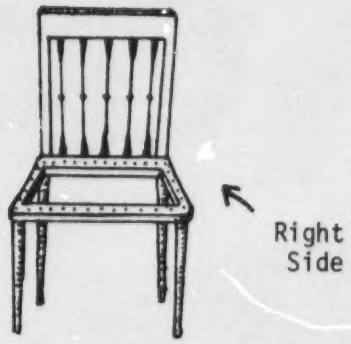

Figure 3

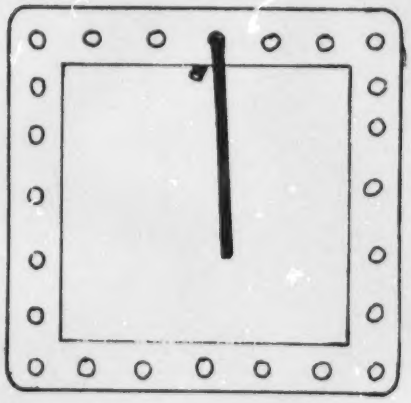

Figure 4

STEP I:

Take one piece of cane. Place it in the center hole in the back. (Figure 4) (If there are an even number of holes, find the middle. Begin with the hole to the right of the middle.) (See Figure 8)

Leave four to six inches hanging below the chair seat. Put in a peg to hold it in place. (Figure 5A) (Side view of hole - Figure 5B)

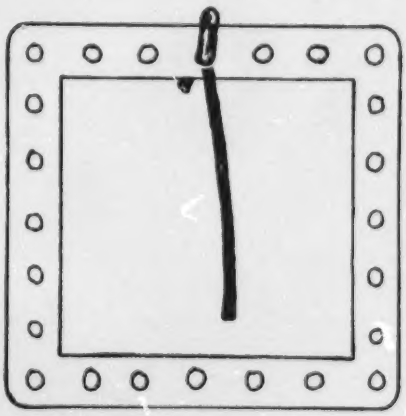

Figure 5A

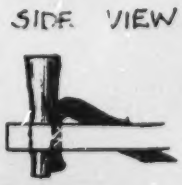

Figure 5B

Pull the cane forward to the hole directly in front of the back hole. (Figure 6) Pull it through the front hole. Put in another peg to keep it in place. Be sure to take out the extra slack in the cane. But do not pull it too tight. The cane will tighten as it dries.

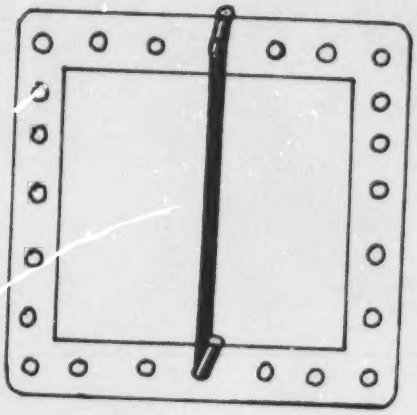

Figure 6

Put the cane up through the next hole. Go back to the back hole. (Figure 7)

Continue in this manner to the edge, being sure to always keep the cane in a straight line. Do not use the corner holes if your chair seat is square. If there are more holes in the front, weave so that the front holes are woven to a hole directly parallel to it on the side. (Figure 8) You can use a ruler or pencil point to measure the distance between the cane. You may need to skip some holes on the side to keep these canes straight. (Figure 8)

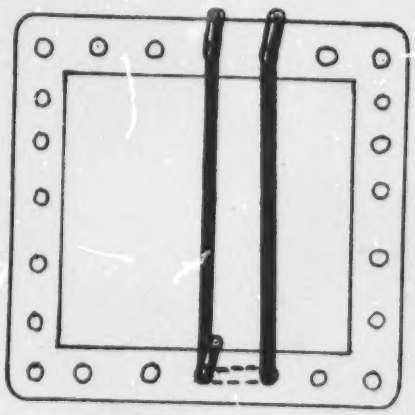

Figure 7

When you reach the last hole, put a peg in place to hold it. Leave four to six inches hanging below the chair. If the cane is not long enough to reach the end, stop in the hole where four to six inches can be left hanging.

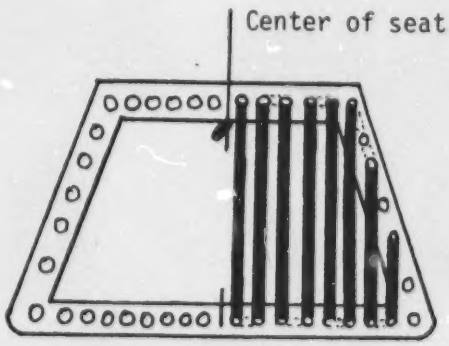

Figure 8

Begin with a new piece of cane in the next hole. Leave four to six inches hanging down. Peg this hole to keep the cane in place. Continue to string the cane.

When the right side is completed, start at the top center hole. Weave to the left. (Figure 9)

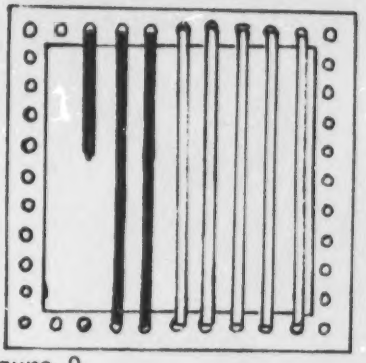

Figure 9

When you have finished with one piece of cane, tie the loose ends in a half hitch knot. (Figure 10) If you wish, you can put white glue on the knots to help hold them.

Figure 10

STEP II:

Begin in the center hole on the right side. String the cane as in STEP I, but go from side to side. Run this piece of cane on top of STEP I's cane. (Figure 11)

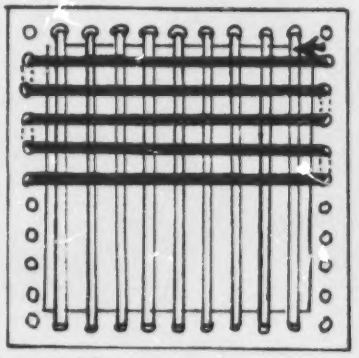

Figure 11

STEP III:

Repeat STEP I with the cane on top of the other two canes. Place to the right of the cane woven in STEP I. (Figure 12)

STEP IV:

This step will use the same holes as STEP II. Be sure this cane is below the STEP II cane. (Figure 13)

Weave over the cane in STEP III. Weaver under the cane in STEP I.

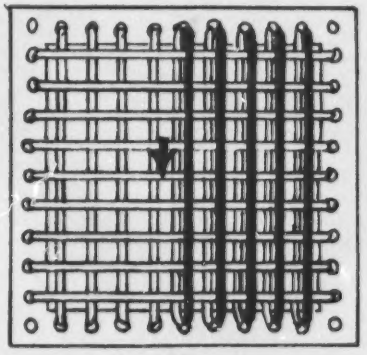

Figure 12

Be sure to keep canes straight and in pairs. Use your small square peg or cork to square up the holes if necessary. (Figure 14) Dampen cane with a sponge if it dries out.

STEP V:

Begin at the right hand rear corner. Weave the cane diagonally. Go over the canes that go from back to front (1 and 3). Go under pairs that go from side to side (2 and 4). (Figure 15)

Remember to dampen the cane with the sponge if it begins to dry.

When you reach the front corner, peg the cane. Go toward the back on the next diagonal. (Figure 16) Continue to fill in 1/2 of the seat. Now complete the lower half.

STEP VI:

Begin at the back left corner and weave diagonally. Go under the front to back (1 and 3) and over the side to side canes (1 and 4) Weave 1/2 of the seat. Then complete the other half.

STEP VIII:

Trim the chair. Use one piece of regular cane and a piece of binder cane. The binder cane can be cut in one of two ways. You can cut four pieces of

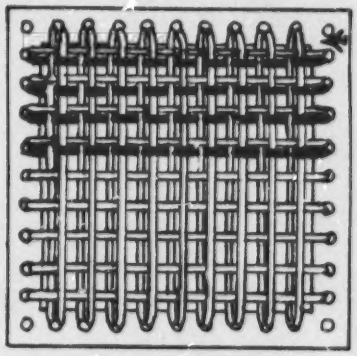

Figure 13

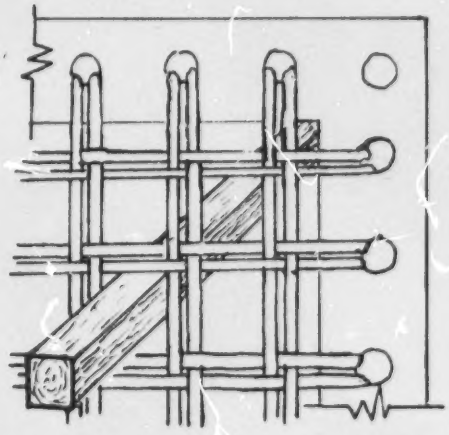

Figure 14

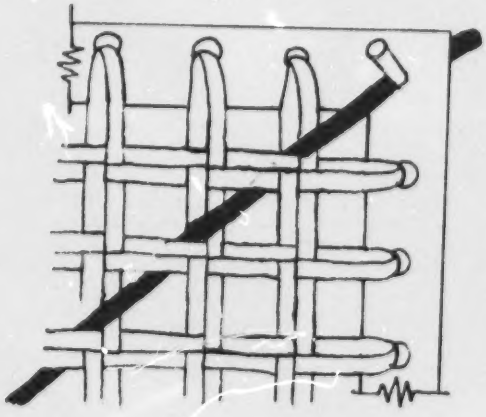

Figure 15

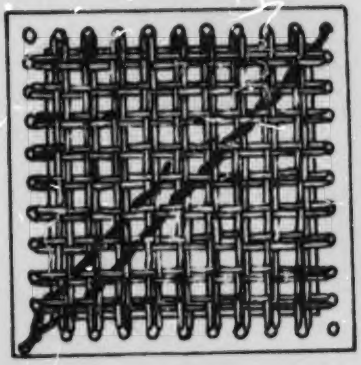

Figure 16

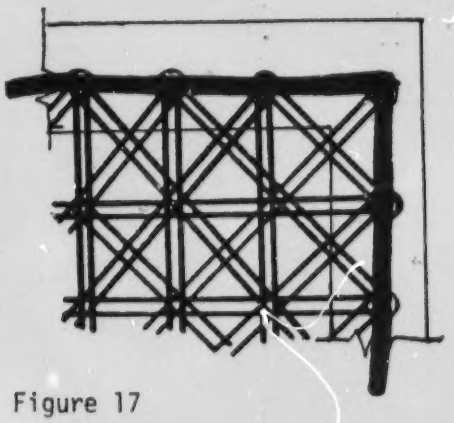

Figure 17

Figure 18

cane that measure six inches longer than each side of your chair seat. Or, cut one long piece of cane that is six inches longer than the entire distance around the chair seat. Lay this around the holes on top of the chair. (Figure 17) Take the other piece of cane and come up through a hole. Go over the top cane. Then go back down through the same hole. (Figure 18)

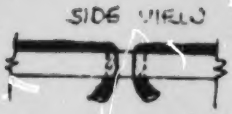

Figure 19

Move to the next hole. Do the same thing around the entire chair. Stop so the ends of the top piece both go down in one hole. (Figure 19)

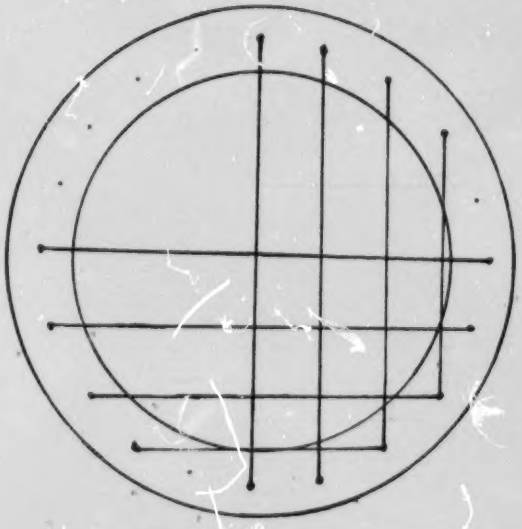

Figure 20

If your chair has an odd shape, you may have trouble using these instructions. Remember to always work with holes directly opposite each other. Also, remember to always keep the cane straight. If you start with the middle holes, it is easier to find the parallel holes. (Figure 20 shows a round seat.)

III. WHAT NEXT?

Caned chairs are as much in style today as in the past. Many chairs that were once treasures have been put away. They are not used because there are so few people who know how to repair cane. A person who learns to repair chair seats could possibly build up enough business to make a living from this project.

It would be helpful to learn to repair all types of seating. Seats of corn shuck, wicker, grass rope and oak splints are also popular.

Other books may be of help in learning about caning. The adult education teacher has a list of books.

Places to get more information about chair caning:

Adult Education teacher.

Local Cooperative Extension Service office.

Places to get caning supplies:

American Handicrafts Stores.

American Handicrafts. 3 Tandy Center, Forth Worth, Texas 76102. (catalogue)